

Melinda Montovani, Social Worker and Brain Injury Specialist  
Brain Injury Association of CT  
Resident of town of West Hartford  
860-604-5639

Good Evening Chairpersons and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Melinda Montovani and I have the privilege of working for the **Brain Injury Association of CT (BIAC)**, where we provide services to the entire state of CT.

Governor Malloy's budget proposal makes cuts to the **Persons with Disabilities line item**. This cut would eliminate the operating grant of \$126,000 entirely for the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut and put our responsibilities back on the Department of Social Services (DSS).

Currently when I call DSS, I cannot get through. I don't get a person, or a voicemail or even a phone tree. There is simply a message saying all lines are busy, please call back later. DSS is charged with determining eligibility for emergency medical and food assistance. If they do not have the capacity to answer the phone, and meet the emergency needs of CT residents, how will they ever be able to meet the needs of the thousands of individuals who are survivors of brain injury in CT? DSS contracted with BIAC because they could not manage everything and we were a cost effective solution. We continue to be a cost effective solution.

The \$126,000 contract has provisions for the equivalent of 6 full time staff. The salary alone of one DSS social worker is \$76,000. Were DSS to take on the responsibilities the agency would need additional staffing as they have already surpassed their breaking point. The total cost of 6 social workers, salary alone, would cost \$456,000.

This is what we are contracted do for \$126,000.

- Provide information , resources and education on problems with and prevention strategies related to TBI throughout CT
- Provide clients, client families and professionals with Support services and resources including information on funding sources , vocational rehabilitation programs, rehabilitation services, family counseling, TBI support groups, cognitive retraining and recreational services
- Collaborate with the Department of Corrections, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Children and Families, Department of Veteran Affairs and other local and state entities

- Provide educational programs, meetings and conferences designed to educate the public, client families, service providers and other professionals on support services available for clients and the prevention of TBI.
- Conduct, train, support client volunteers as presenters at educational programs.
- Provide Community education programs so students in elementary through high school to increase awareness of the consequences and prevention strategies for TBI
- Provide Educational meetings for hospitals and/or rehab discharge planning staff to provide services and resources on support programs available for clients
- Conduct at least 50 programs and meetings for community and health professionals shall
- Offer Conferences, lecture series, and /or health fairs for clients
- Attend Corporate health fairs, exhibits and presentation
- Maintain a minimum of 17 support groups throughout CT. (We currently have 30).
- Facilitate a Provider's council meetings to promote networking and information exchange between providers.
- Support existing legislative initiatives, and create and introduce new legislation, benefiting clients.

Document all of the above and stay within a budget of \$126,000.

We do it. No one else in the state does this. We employ brain injury specialists and we do not duplicate any services.

We do far more than this, and I could share for hours on the personal stories of the individuals we work with, the challenges, the barriers and the triumphs. But I won't. I understand the focus of tonight is about finding cost effective solutions during these tough economic times.

So the state can support a cost effective solution. It can preserve the line item in the budget for persons with disabilities and continue to contract with BIAC for \$126,000.

Or the Governor can cut our operating grant, return these duties to DSS where the cost of completing the same work would cost upwards of \$456,000 in salaries alone.

I am a social worker, and even I can do the math.

**Please preserve the funds in the Persons with Disabilities line item of the budget.**

Thank you.